

Apiary Inspection Program

The NC beekeeping industry remains viable and strong. Our inspectors help beekeepers through field inspections, educational meetings, and field days and attempt to be available to assist the beekeepers in any way necessary. Our goal is to continue to improve our overall inspections and in particular our documentation of them. Our ultimate goal is to reduce the rate of honey bee disease and pest problems. The numbers of colonies the office has documented for inspection for the 2008/2009 fiscal year is 6008, and 35 hives were documented to have American Foulbrood. As of June 30th, fifty-six parties were permitted to sell bees in North Carolina during the 2009 calendar year.

Numerous problems and disorders challenge beekeepers and the industry. Unfortunately, there are several pests, predators and problems that have made this year a difficult one for the beekeepers. One problem that appears to be unique this year is associated with queen acceptance and egg viability. Honey production is expected to be down this year. There are many explanations given for this, but none seem to be reasonable for the varying circumstances.

The *Varroa* mite persists as a major threat to the beekeeping industry in NC and is probably a contributing factor to some of the circumstances already described. Several new products have been registered for use in controlling this pest; however, the mites have developed resistance to some of these materials in short order and rendered these products ineffective. Although chemical treatment of mites may be necessary, some miticides have been demonstrated to have adverse effects on bees. Another perplexing factor is the growing use of unregistered materials that may also have adverse effects on

honey bee health and may not be efficacious in controlling mites. This and, in some cases, the improper use of antibiotics to control diseases can further complicate useful treatment regimes.

Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) continues to be a major topic of discussion by the popular media regarding honey bees and their plight this year. The press coverage has highlighted the value of honey bees to a broader audience and raised awareness of their importance. Due to the restricted parameters described as symptoms of CCD, this disorder has not yet been documented in NC. This is not to say that it has not occurred here, but we have not seen evidence specifically attributable to this condition.

Another threat facing the beekeeping industry of North Carolina is the establishment of Africanized honey bees (AHB) (*Apis mellifera scutellata*) on the eastern seaboard (southern Florida). In NC we are engaged in an outreach program to emergency response personnel to familiarize them to the potential threat of AHB. We are also reaching out to the structural pest industry and its membership. We are collecting samples of bees in order to determine their geographic origin and their propensity for increased defensive behavior. The NCDA&CS and NCSU are collaborating in conducting this survey. At this time none of the samples collected was determined to be of the AHB type. We are striving to have our inspectors and our lab prepared to deal with any AHB incursion or incident. We encourage beekeepers to please let us know of any colonies that seem to be displaying any unusual or inexplicable defensive behavior so that we can maintain a beekeeping industry in North Carolina that is not threatened by the reputation of this more defensive type of bee.

We continue to enjoy a good working relationship with our friends in the NC State University Apiculture Research and Extension Program. We have had the opportunity to assist them in some of their projects and would like to express our gratitude for their assistance in many of our projects.